



PFLAG
Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays

EDMONTON

October 1995

NEXT MEETING

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 19, 95

7:30pm

BOYSTOWN CAFE

10112 - 124 St

LOWER FLOOR

Please use this entrance which is two doors south of the Boystown Cafe entrance. Parking is available behind the cafe.

We look forward to meeting both old and new members in this freshly renovated facility. These more spacious accommodations will enhance PFLAG Edmonton's ability to fulfill our three goals of support, education and advocacy.

As always we warmly welcome les/bi/gay people to attend our meetings.

Questions? Comments? Please call Lynne [redacted] or [redacted] VB 3524.

PFLAG CANADA !

PFLAG Canada may be "born" in late 1995 or early 1996. Stay tuned for further info!

PFLAG KINGSTON

In a marvelous letter from Kingston, Marion writes, "Although we have been in existence since the late 1980's, we

are a small group. Parents are very nervous to come to meetings in this



small town, and we count only four families as members. We also have one gay man who attends our meetings fairly regularly. Other parents and lesbians and gays drift in and out of our meetings."

Activities include:

- * Advocacy letters to Allen Rock and Jean Chretien;
- * Filling over 10 of Svend Robinson's petitions;
- * Participation in a "coming out" seminar with members of a Kingston les/bi/gay group;
- * Participation in a workshop with a group of Youth and Child

Guidance Counselors at St. Lawrence College in Brockville. One mother discussed the many problems les/bi/gay youth face.

* Participation in two workshops at a "Youth For Equality 1995" day at the Kingston Collegiate and Vocational Institute;

* Participation in a workshop with trained volunteer telephone counselors who staff the les/bi/gay information line. One mother discussed the reactions of parents when their children come out;

* A talk given by a mother at a club for mature women students on Queen's University Campus. Her talk was well attended and was received with much interest;

* Participation in a Press Conference sponsored by The Canadian Human Rights Campaign and held in the Parliament Buildings, Ottawa;

* Arranging for the airing on a local cable television station of keynote speaker Bruce Hilton who spoke at the Conference on Homophobia (organized by PFLAG Houston).

* Advising social workers from the Children's Aid Society and other Health Care Clinics in Kingston about reading material.

PFLAG Kingston may be small in size but it's definitely big in activities. Congratulations and keep up the great work!



PFLAG CALGARY

Editor Gail A. has "taken the bull by the horns" and published PFLAG Calgary's first newsletter. Covering issues of support, education and advocacy it promises to be a focus for parents, other family members and friends of les/bi/gay people! We eagerly look forward to reading the next issue.

PFLAG SUPPORT

THE SHIRT OFF HIS BACK!

by Dorothy Galton

(Courtesy PFLAG Vancouver)

This shirt is now my shirt. Here's how I got it:

My PFLAG group had reached the end of our walk in the Pride Parade on August 7th in Vancouver. Another PFLAG mum and I were strolling across the soggy wet grass in the drizzling rain and passed three handsome men in a group, garbed in these T-shirts (etc. of course). I remarked aloud to my companion, as I read the legend on their backs, what a wonderfully apt summary this is, as a definition of "gay" in society, and I wondered where I could buy one. The guys turned and smiled warmly upon us.

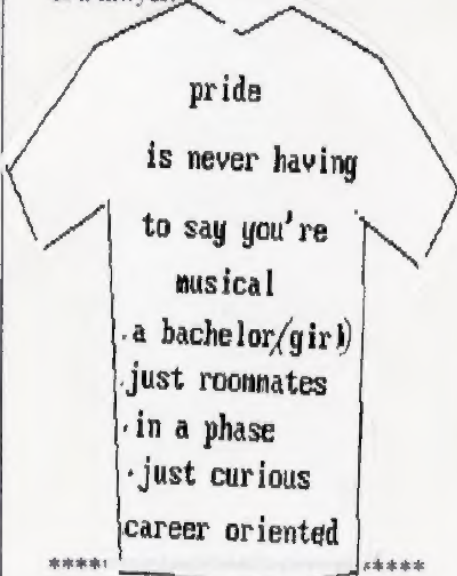
"Oh" I said, as I read the front of their shirts, "I guess that means I can't buy a shirt like yours." Barristers and Solicitors: Baycroft Wilkinson MacDonald was the announcement on the front.

One guy started pulling off his T-shirt over his head, leaving his smart shirt underneath as his remaining cover on that cool wet day.

"Make the most of it", he chuckled as he handed it to me. "This is probably the only time you'll get the shirt off a lawyer's back!"

I love my shirt!

PS Mark MacDonald is now acting as my solicitor - though on that wet afternoon he had no way of knowing I'd soon need the help of a lawyer.



PFLAG EDUCATION

SAFE SCHOOLS IN SEATTLE

(Courtesy PFLAG Seattle-Tacoma)

...The Safe Schools Coalition is a public-private partnership of 34 agencies, including PFLAG, and a number of private individuals. Its purpose is to help make Washington State schools safe for bisexual, gay, lesbian and transgender youth, parents and educators. The Anti-Violence Project is an ongoing effort to examine anti-gay harassment and violence in our state schools from grades kindergarten through twelfth. In the first year of the Project, January through June 1994, 23 incidents were reported. This second year, July 1994 through June 1995, 27 additional incident reports were received.

We present in this newsletter, excerpts from the *Executive Summary: Fall 1995...*

PFLAG EDMONTON

The 27 incidents of harassment and violence came from 18 schools:

- * 12 high schools, 3 middle schools and 3 elementary schools
- * 12 school districts...
- * 5 counties...

The incidents included:

- * 5 one-time climate setting incidents (a first time occurrence that was not challenged);
- * 5 cases of on-going verbal and other harassment;
- * 6 incidents involving physical harassment and sexual assault short of rape;
- * 5 physical assaults, 2 involved serious beatings of a total of three people;
- * six gang rapes; a total of 8 children and teens were raped.

Offenders outnumbered their targets by an average of three against one. Four students dropped out of school as a result. Three individuals attempted suicide and one person completed suicide.

The full report details each of the above incidents. It also offers very specific recommendations for Creating Safe Schools with suggestions for School Boards and Administrators, Educators and Parents.

To order free copies of the full Second Annual Report call the Northwest Coalition Against Malicious Harassment 1-206-233-9136

or

send a stamped (American), self-addressed envelope to PO Box 16776, Seattle, USA, 98116



IT'S A GAY LIFE!

October 1995

"SALLY'S SONG"

by Rev. Sally Boyle

United Church, Rural Alberta

Spring, 1988

"I was raised on a farm in the southern part of the province (Alberta). I watched the turning of the seasons with childlike awe and wonder through much of my youth and into early adulthood. The big seasons were obvious and brought their own questions about life and death...inevitably they brought some of the questions which drive parents crazy like "Why is a leaf Mommy?" And when the response dwelt on the "what" of the leaf the question came again with greater intensity - "No, why is a leaf? or "Why does the snow have diamonds in it and crunch?" When I was a little older the questions became less theological and more practical like "How can there still be ice in the bottom of the slough when its so warm outside?" The real question of course being, "Why can't I go swimming?"

Each of the seasons brought its own childhood joys and with them came a more subtle childhood theology. Things die, things come to life again. The trees lose their leaves but they rest awhile and grow new ones which grow old and they lose them again. And I watched those cycles with fascination.

It was not until much later in my life that I realized there were



seasons within the seasons and that the order was much more complex and that we too have seasons within the seasons of our lives.

This mornings scripture reminded me of the season which I both saw and did not see. The life of a seed in a different kind of cycle. Kept under proper conditions a seed will live, dormant, unflowering for a long time, possibly forever. We stored grain for months at least and occasionally for years. Provided the grain was kept under the right conditions it would stay dormant. And the right conditions for dormancy are tomblike - dark, cold, dry. However change the

conditions only slightly by adding warmth and food and that seed will burst itself in an attempt to give life. It grows right out of its old skin and in so doing is changed itself and gives life to a new form which is greater than itself.

And seeds produce a variety of life forms, some of which we call weeds and some of which we call flowers; some of which we sell for a profit and some of which just wildly grow up in that crop which we sell for profit. Whatever the case the judgment is ours, not God's. God created all the seeds with their own individual purposes. Some of the "weeds" which we presently disdain have been used and are being used again for medicinal purposes. God's word is "It is GOOD".

The other really significant thing about the seed is that once it has lost its life - to give life - you can't find it. Ordinarily it will return to the earth itself and become part of the energy which gives growth food to the next seed. It becomes again totally at one with the life giving body of which it is a part.

We, too, have seeds, seeds planted deep within by God. And so too, our seeds lie dormant sometimes for a long time, sometimes even for a lifetime, until the conditions for growth are right. As with the seeds in the ground, the seeds in us need warmth and nourishment, a nurturing, loving environment and



they will blossom and produce flowers, some for beauty, some for shade, some for medicine and healing, each with a purpose from God. Just as we make the soil ready to receive the seed by plowing it and overturning it, so too God often makes the soul ready for the seed by cultivating it and overturning it. As human beings we know what those times have been. We speak of torment and anguish, we speak of turmoil and frustration, the author of Hebrews speaks of Jesus offering up prayers with loud cries and tears. The one claim I have heard most often from people who have chosen to venture onto a spiritual path is "I couldn't stand it anymore, I knew there had to be a better way. I couldn't take the pain".

Just as surely as we turn the sod to plant a garden, God turns the soul to plant the Garden of Eden.

And it is of that turning and of that garden and of the losses which one encounters to reach that place that I wish to speak. For God instilled in me a seed of difference, a seed of opportunity to view the world from a different perspective, a seed of difference in sexual orientation and once upon a time I thought that I could let that seed lie dormant until I died and only God and I would know. But God is like my Dad and my Grandfather before him. If the seed didn't grow you sent and coaxed it a little, you poured on a little fertilizer, you added a little water and if all else failed you turned the soil again. God was just that persistent. While I denied and refused to grow, believing that if I did I would grow to something ugly, and shameful, and too awful to look upon; while I refused to grow God devised more ways to encourage growth. And after many years feeling like my heart was being shredded and my

innards cut up (on some occasions quite literally since I had numerous surgeries for imagined diseases) I finally took the risk one day in the midst of an alcoholic stupor. I gave up. It was just that simple. I gave up - I chose to let the seed be nourished and produce life and in so doing I opened myself to the experience of death.

Patience not being one of my virtues I of course wanted immediate results but those were not forthcoming. The seed grew slowly as seeds are wont to do. And this seed was attempting to push new life up through a forest of fear and self-hatred which often choked out the sunlight. It didn't really have a lot to go on the seed of life within me. Sometimes I almost forgot that God and I were in on this together as co-creators so I would presume that God would do it all and I wouldn't need to do anything. Occasionally I would remember that the seed of difference within me needed nourishment, water, love. Too long it had been left untended in the cold and the dark surrounded by hatred. If I were to be who God intended then I would have to start loving the seed of that reality. Occasionally I would become really brave and attempt to see the seed of my orientation as a small child full of life and love and every. Those moments were short lived as the image almost always turned dark and ugly.

I discovered I had a lot of dying to do. I had to let go of every carefully taught pre-conceived notion of how life was going to be. I had to accept that I would probably never have children so I put out all the love I could to the children I knew because they bring such an important and open way of seeing the world and I didn't want to miss

IT'S A GAY LIFE!

seeing the world from their perspective.

I gave up the idea of job security, success and the nice house in the nice neighborhood with a white picket fence and a little garden. For a time I died even to the possibility that I would ever be loved, deeply and in a committed way by another human being. Because you see the only thing I knew for sure about the seed which I finally was allowing to grow was that most people saw it as a weed, to be plucked and tossed.

And so I died and the seed died and became again the part of the whole of me, to nurture and encourage the next generation or season of growth in me.

In time, with the encouragement of some others I took a look at who I am now and discovered that I am a most interesting contribution to this garden. I'm a little like a rose bush. Some folks look and see the roses. Others look and see the thorns, its all in ones perspective. And I am making an honest contribution out of who I truly am. In the meantime I have made some discoveries about life and death along the way. The first is that God planted this crop and said "IT IS GOOD" and now wants us to make a new covenant, an new commitment with each other to see all as good and to nurture to full maturity the variety God provided for without questioning their usefulness or right to be here. Second, nothing grows in an atmosphere of repression. It is not possible for people any more than plants to be whole if they are being condemned, kept in the cold, attempting to exist in the dark, believing they are ugly. The third learning is that growth only happens when we let go of all the pre-conceived notions of ourselves, others, and how we think God



intended things to be. In the economy of God things are not weighed on a balance sheet with losses and gains tallied and salvation distributed in accordance with those who come out with the highest points. God simply gives us the opportunity to be fully alive with the gifts and experiences we have been given. With God things are often reversed, the rigid rules we impose are not there at all. God asks only that we give up pre-conceived notions of how its supposed to be and live with how it is...a death, a life. Finally I have learned of love and even a little of trust. I know there is enough for everyone and we needn't fight over it. I have a nice house in a nice neighborhood and I have discovered the joy of a warm relationship, and if having security means I must give up the most integral part of my being, I don't want security. The seed has given itself up to produce the fruit of wholeness and new life. I have undergone the death, I will not return to the tomb which in my life has been the closet. I live in the light and I am not alone. Thanks be to God.

(Thanks to Eve and Bert Fry for passing this amazing story of courage on to PFLAG Edmonton!)

EVENTS CALENDAR

JEFFREY

Another gay themed movie in distribution is *Jeffrey*, based on Paul Rudnick's highly successful stage play of the same name. *Jeffrey* stars Steven Weber, from television's *Wings*, Michael T. Weiss and Patrick Stewart, who starred as Captain Picard in *Star Trek: The Next Generation*. The

movie also has appearances by Olympia Dukakis, Kathy Majimy and Sigourney Weaver.

In the movie the main character, Jeffrey, is a gay man who decides to give up sex as his response to AIDS. The movie is very much about AIDS and how gay men have responded to the epidemic. It does not hesitate to present the gay lesbian community as it really is.

Showing at the Princess Theatre
Oct. 4 - 8, '95.

(Write-up courtesy Sept. 13 issue of *Perceptions*)

CABARET

(an EVM event)

Saturday, October 28, 1995

Catalyst Theatre, 10943-84 Ave

* 7:00pm - Cocktails

* 8:00pm - Showtime!

Everybody loves a Cabaret! Join us as we celebrate Hallowe'en in the company of friends as the choir pulls out all the stops in a riotous evening that is sure to delight!

ENTERTAINMENT! OPEN BID
AUCTION! FUN! FOOD!
PRIZES! FRIENDS!

LIATRIS

HARVEST EXCHANGE

October 14, 1995

Contact Randy [REDACTED] for details.



IT'S A GAY LIFE!

SUICIDE PREVENTION EVENTS

First, a few facts:

- * In 1993, 427 people committed suicide in Alberta;
- * Many suicides go undetected, reported as accidental;
- * The rate is still increasing slowly in the young population;
- * Canada has a higher suicide rate than the US and is one of the highest in the world;
- * Alberta has a suicide rate much higher than the rest of Canada, exceeded by Quebec and the Yukon and the Northwest Territories;
- * Up to 15% of people suffering from an untreated depression or anxiety state will end up taking their lives by suicide;
- * The suicide rate increased steadily in Alberta by 170% from 1950 to 1980 in the young age group;
- * The second highest cause of death in the young age group (15-24 yrs) is suicide;
- * The suicide rate amongst native youths is much higher than that of non-native youths;
- * 30% of male adolescents who commit suicide are homosexual and take their lives because of a struggle over acceptance of their sexual orientation reinforced by our homophobic society. The suicide rate is also higher for adolescent females who have a homosexual orientation.

Several workshops related to suicide prevention are available this month in Edmonton. Those members answering the info/support lines may be especially interested:



SUPPORT WORKSHOPS*** Basic Counselling Skills**

Do you find people asking you for help? This course covers the basics to aid you in becoming a more effective helper. During this course you will develop communications and listening skills and learn the art of asking questions.

Date: Saturday, Oct. 14, '95

Time: 9 am - 4pm

Cost: \$35.00

*** Suicide Intervention Workshop**

This two day workshop includes attitudes and clues to suicide, risk assessment, effective intervention techniques, and community resources.

Date: Fri. & Sat. Oct 27 & 28

Time: 8:30am - 4:30pm

Cost: \$70.00

*** Suicide Awareness**

In this workshop you will become aware of characteristics of suicidal thought, identify and recognize common signs, and learn about community resources.

Date: Wed. Dec. 6, '95

Time: 9:00am - 12 noon

Cost: \$20.00

*** Suicide Bereavement**

This workshop will provide an awareness of the unique characteristics of suicide bereavement and information on how to support those grieving a suicide.

Date: Wed. Dec. 6, '95

Time: 1 pm - 4 pm

Cost: \$20.00

or both Dec. 6 workshops for \$35.00

The above workshops will be held at:

The Support Network

#302, 11456 Jasper Ave

Edmonton, Alberta

T5K 0M1

*** Hearing the Cry For Help**

Imagine that a friend, family member, client or fellow volunteer told you that life wasn't worth living any more. Would you know what to do next? Unless your answer is a finite "yes!", this session is for you. We will explore several of the most prevalent myths surrounding suicide as well as the attitudes about it which block people from being effective helpers. Moreover, we will teach you the tools used in suicide Prevention by Edmonton's Distress Line volunteers. You'll come away knowing exactly what to do if this situation ever arose.

Date: Sat. Oct. 28, '95

Time: 1pm - 3pm

Cost: Free!

Place: Heritage Room

City Hall

Bring your own coffee mug.

Please notify Jay Garbutt if you wish to attend. Ph. [REDACTED]

IT'S A GAY LIFE!**OSTRACIZING THE SELF**

Preferring to sit, and watch
helps only solitude grow.
Colors exist
but for me they've
stopped breathing.
Music not longer offers
it's safe and warm escape.
I'm always trapped
by walls
by doors
by my mind.
Animated,
everything around me
moves
and lives
as I blend
into the background.
No longer sad
for what I am
it is all too real
to shrug away.

Tears remain inside
until I coax them out.
My laughter reduces
to faint smiles and
twitching shoulder movements.
Trying is too hard.
Letting go only angers me.
Joy is in others.
I am one of life's toys
somehow broken.
Yet I am a fantastic actor
feigning the roles of boyfriend,
lover, good friend, confidant.
I am incapable of love.

There is undirected hate
building and I cannot
find a scapegoat.
Perhaps none exists...

Don

